

Appl. No. 09/698,498
Amdt. dated Feb. 10, 2006
In Resp. to Office Action of Nov. 10, 2005

REMARKS

Claims 1-26 are pending. Claims 2-14 and 16-28 were presently or previously cancelled without prejudice. Claims 1 and 15 have been amended as suggestion by the Examiner to place amended claims 1 and 15 in condition for allowance. New dependent claims 29-48 have been added.

I. ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication by the Examiner that claims 7 and 21 contain patentable subject matter.

In the Office Action, the Examiner stated that claims 7 and 21 were merely objected to for being dependent from a rejected independent claim, but that claims 7 and 21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the elements of independent claim.

Applicants have followed the Examiner's instructions by combining the elements of claims 1 and 7 and by combining the elements of claims 15 and 21.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that amended claims 1 and 15 are in condition for allowance.

II. CANCELLED CLAIMS

Applicants have presently or previously cancelled claims 2-14 and 16-28 without prejudice.

By cancelling claims, without prejudice, Applicants respectfully reserve the right to vigorously pursue cancelled subject matter in continuing applications, for example. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully reserve the right to argue the patentability of the cancelled subject matter in the future, for example, before the United States Patent and Trademark Office or before a court or any other judicial forum.

Applicants can neither confirm nor deny the Examiner's characterizations of the documents cited during the prosecution of the present application. In addition, Applicants can neither confirm nor deny the Examiner's characterizations of recited elements as set forth in the claims.

Appl. No. 09/698,498
Amdt. dated Feb. 10, 2006
In Resp. to Office Action of Nov. 10, 2005

III. NEW DEPENDENT CLAIMS

Applicants respectfully submit new dependent claims 29-48. Support for claims 29-38 can be found, for example, in the specification at page 48, lines 20-27. Support for claims 39-48 can be found, for example, in the specification at page 9, line 26 to page 10, line 10.

Claims 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45 and 47 depend, directly or indirectly, from amended claim 1. Since amended claim 1 is in condition for allowance, claims 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45 and 47 which depend from amended claim 1 are in condition for allowance.

Claims 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46 and 48 depend, directly or indirectly, from amended claim 15. Since amended claim 15 is in condition for allowance, claims 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46 and 48 which depend from amended claim 15 are in condition for allowance.

IV. NO FEES BELIEVED DUE

No excess claims fees are believed to be due.

Applicants originally paid for twenty-eight (28) total claims including four (4) independent claims. Twenty-eight (28) total claims is the highest total claims for which Applicants have previously paid in the present application.

At present, only twenty-two (22) total claims (i.e., less than twenty-eight (28) total claims) are now pending including only two (2) independent claims.

Since the pending total claims are less than the highest total claims for which Applicants previously paid, it is believed that no excess claims fees are due.

Appl. No. 09/698,498
Amdt. dated Feb. 10, 2006
In Resp. to Office Action of Nov. 10, 2005

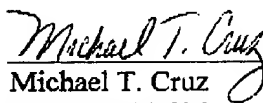
V. CONCLUSION

In view of at least the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims 1, 15 and 29-48 are in condition for allowance. Should anything remain in order to place the present application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge additional fees or credit overpayments to the deposit account of McAndrews, Held & Malloy, Account No. 13-0017.

Dated: February 10, 2006

Respectfully submitted,



Michael T. Cruz
Reg. No. 44,636

McAndrews, Held & Malloy, Ltd.
500 West Madison Street, 34th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60661
Telephone: (312) 775-8084
Facsimile: (312) 775-8100